

“Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation,  
and argue with people in the best manner.” (The Holy Quran 16:125)

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Exponent of  
Islam and  
the Lahore  
Ahmadiyya  
Movement  
for over  
seventy-five  
years  
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# *The Light*

## *& Islamic Review*

January – February 2001

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Presents  
Islam as:  
PEACEFUL  
TOLERANT  
RATIONAL  
INSPIRING  
•

Published on the World-Wide Web at: <http://www.muslim.org>

Vol. 78

CONTENTS

No. 1

- **Removal of some misconceptions – 3**  
*From the book Izāla Auhām*  
by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad  
Translated by Sarah Ahmad and Zainib Ahmad. .... 3
- **Fasting — Its impact on the social behaviour  
of a Muslim**  
by Mr. Nasir Ahmad, Lahore. .... 6
- **Are Muslims supposed to be miserable during Ramadan?**  
*Reflections on the coincidence of Ramadan and the  
Christmas season, December 2000*  
by Selim Ahmad, England. .... 9
- **The finality of prophethood – 2**  
*Speech at the annual meeting of the  
Lahore Ahmadiyya Anjuman in December 1917*  
by Maulana Muhammad Ali. .... 11

احمدیہ انجمن اشاعت اسلام لاہور

◆ Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha‘at Islam Lahore Inc., U.S.A. ◆  
1315 Kingsgate Road, Columbus, Ohio, 43221–1504, U.S.A.

*The Light* was founded in 1921 as the organ of the AHMADIYYA ANJUMAN ISHA'AT ISLAM (Ahmadiyya Association for the propagation of Islam) of Lahore, Pakistan. *The Islamic Review* was published in England from 1913 for over 50 years, and in the U.S.A. from 1980 to 1991. The present periodical represents the beliefs of the world-wide branches of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore.

ISSN: 1060–4596

Editor: Dr. Zahid Aziz. Format and Design: The Editor.

Circulation: Mrs. Samina Malik.

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### Beliefs and aims

The main object of the A.A.I.I.L. is to present the true, original message of Islam to the whole world — Islam as it is found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, obscured today by grave misconceptions and wrong popular notions.

Islam seeks to attract *the hearts and minds* of people towards the truth, by means of reasoning, good moral example, and the natural beauty of its principles. It neither aspires to gain political power, nor allows the use of force in support of the faith.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), our Founder, arose to remind the world that Islam is:

**International:** It recognizes prophets being raised among all nations and requires Muslims to believe in them all. Truth and goodness can be found in all religions. God treats all human beings equally justly, regardless of race, nationality or religion.

**Peaceful:** Allows use of force only in unavoidable self-defence. Teaches Muslims to live peacefully under any rule which accords them freedom of religion.

**Tolerant:** Gives full freedom to everyone to hold and practise any creed or religion. Requires us to tolerate differences of belief and opinion.

**Rational:** In all matters, it urges use of human reason and knowledge. Blind following is condemned and independence of thought is granted.

**Inspiring:** Worship is not a ritual, but provides living contact with a Living God, Who answers prayers and speaks to His righteous servants even today as in the past.

**Non-sectarian:** Every person professing Islam by the words *Lā ilāha ill-Allāh, Muḥammad-ur rasūl-ullāh* (There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) is a Muslim. A Muslim cannot be expelled from Islam by anyone.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad taught that *no* prophet, old or new, is to arise after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. However, *Mujaddids* will be raised by God to revive and rekindle the light of Islam.

### About ourselves

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore has branches in the following countries:

U.S.A.	Australia
U.K.	Canada
Holland	Fiji
Indonesia	Germany
Suriname	India
Trinidad	South Africa
Guyana	

The Movement has members and supporters in many other countries as well. In Berlin, it has a large historical mosque constructed in the mid-1920s.

### Achievements:

The Anjuman has produced extensive literature on Islam, originally in English and Urdu, including translations of the Holy Quran with commentaries. These books are being translated into other languages, such as French, German, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Dutch and Polish.

The Anjuman has run several Muslim missions around the world, including the first ever in Western Europe.

The Movement's unique contribution to Islamic thought is summed up on the left.

### History:

**1889:** Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad founded the Ahmadiyya Movement.

**1901:** Movement given name *Ahmadiyya* after Holy Prophet Muhammad's other famous name *Ahmad*.

**1905:** Hazrat Mirza appoints central body (Anjuman) to manage the Movement.

**1908:** Death of Hazrat Mirza. Succeeded by Maulana Nur-ud-Din as Head.

**1914:** Death of Maulana Nur-ud-Din. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam founded at Lahore as continuation of the original Anjuman. Maulana Muhammad Ali elected as Head.

**1951:** Death of Maulana Muhammad Ali after fifty years of glorious service to the cause of Islam. Maulana Sadr-ud-Din (d. 1981) becomes Head.

**1981–1996:** Dr. Saeed Ahmad Khan, an eminent medical doctor and religious scholar, led the Movement, at a time of intense persecution.

**1996:** Prof. Dr. Asghar Hameed, a distinguished retired University Professor of Mathematics, and learned Islamic scholar, elected Head.

## Removal of some misconceptions – 3

From the book *Izāla Auhām*

ازاله اوهام

by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad

Translated by

Sarah Ahmad and Zainib Ahmad

(with some revision by the Editor *The Light*)

The second objection is that I have claimed to be the Promised Messiah because of suffering from melancholia or some other mental illness.

The answer is that I should not be unhappy at being called mad or insane by someone; on the contrary, I am pleased because foolish people have always been calling even every prophet and messenger in his time by these names, and since ancient times every nation has been giving exactly this title to reformers sent to it from God. There is yet another cause for happiness for me, for today that prophecy has been fulfilled which was published in *Barahin Ahmadiyya*, that people would call me a madman.

However, what is surprising is what is insane or irrational in this claim, on account of which the critics suspect that I have gone mad? I leave the judgment to the conscience and intelligence of the critics themselves, placing before them my statements and those of my opponents, as to which of the two parties has lost its senses, and whose statements are declared by sound reason to be madness and whose to be sane.

My explanation regarding the Promised Messiah whose descent from the heavens and reappearance in the world is awaited, as God the Most High has disclosed to me by His grace and favour, is as follows. The Holy Quran nowhere mentions the return of Jesus to this world; in fact, according to the Quran he has departed from the world forever. However, there are several Hadith reports, full of metaphors, which prophesy the return of the Messiah to this world. The context of those reports shows that it is most certainly not meant that Jesus, son of Mary, shall in actual fact return to the world.

It is, on the contrary, a subtle allegory denoting that in some age which would be similar to the age of Jesus son of Mary, a man will be sent for the

reformation of mankind who will resemble Jesus in his nature, powers and the task assigned to him. Just as Jesus revived the religion of Moses and explained again to the Jews the essence and real meaning of the Torah which they had neglected, similarly the second Messiah would revive the religion of the one who is 'like unto Moses', that is, the *Khatam al-anbiya* the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him. This Messiah of the 'like unto Moses', in terms of the events of his life and all the other consequences of his acceptance by his people or their denial, would entirely resemble the Messiah who was given to Moses. What God the Most High has revealed to me now is that I am that Promised Messiah.

### Prevalent concepts among Muslims regarding the arrival of the Promised Messiah

In accordance with their old ideas which have been fixed in their minds, the Muslims claim that the Messiah, son of Mary, shall bodily descend from the heavens, with his hands resting upon the shoulders of two angels, and he shall land near a minaret in eastern Damascus. Some say that he will descend on the minaret itself and the Muslims will bring him down from the top by means of a ladder. At this point the angels will leave him. He will be finely dressed, not that he will be unclothed. Then he will meet the Mahdi and exchange greetings with him. Despite the passage of so much time, his age will still be as it was, thirty-two or thirty-three years. Time will have wrought no change in his body nor aged him. His hair and nails will be no longer than they were when he was raised to heaven. He will not have changed at all, but after descending on earth he will again be subject to the ravages of time.

He will not undertake wars and fighting of any kind but there will be such a power in his breath that the unbelievers will die as far as his sight reaches. So his breath will have the power of killing living people, just as in his first advent he could bring the dead to life. Then our *ulama*, forgetting their first statement, say something contrary to it, that wars and fighting is just what he will undertake, and the one-eyed Dajjal (Anti-Christ) will be killed by him. Jews will also die at his command.

### Prevalent beliefs controversial and self-contradictory

Now on the one hand they accept that the Promised Messiah is the same Jesus, son of Mary, the prophet of Allah, to whom the Gospel was revealed, upon whom the Angel Gabriel used to descend, and who is a

messenger from among the revered messengers of God. Yet on the other hand they say that after his return to earth he will not even mention that he is a prophet, in fact he will have been removed from the office of prophethood, and will have joined the *Umma* of our Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him, obeying the law of the Quran like other Muslims and saying his prayers behind an Imam as other Muslims do. Some say that he will follow the Hanafi school of law and accept Abu Hanifa as his Imam. But they have not yet clearly explained which of the four spiritual orders he will follow: whether he will be a Qadari, a Chisti, a Suharawardi or a Naqshbandi like Hazrat Mujaddid of Sirhind.

Hence, after labelling him a prophet, they have reduced his status to a point that no one in his right mind can do. Then, by taking metaphorical descriptions in a literal sense, his special tasks are explained to be that he shall break the cross and kill the swine. Now one cannot imagine what is the benefit of breaking crosses, and even if he manages to break, say, one or two million crosses, can the Christians, who are devoted to the Cross, not make more of them?

His second task, to kill swine, also appears bizarre if taken literally. Is this how the Messiah, after his descent to earth, will perform his great mission? Will he just set out with a pack of dogs and begin to hunt and kill the swine? If this is true then it is good news for the Sikhs and others who love to go hunting for swine as they will have good company. However, it may not be possible for the Christians to benefit from the slaughter of swine because they have already attained perfection in hunting swine. There are a thousand shops in London itself that sell the meat of swine, and it has also been learnt from reliable sources that apart from these shops, twenty-five thousand pigs are sent daily out of London to the people living outside. So the question is: Is it worthy of the dignity of a prophet who has been sent to reform mankind to waste his precious time hunting a filthy animal like the swine? According to the Torah, even touching swine is a deadly sin. I would also say that, firstly, hunting is a pastime of the idle. However, even if the Messiah would have the inclination to hunt, and would like to indulge in it day and night, then are there not enough clean animals in the world, such as deer and rabbits, that he would have to defile his hands with the blood of an impure animal?

Now I have presented a complete sketch, as portrayed by the people of my nation, of the events of the life of the Messiah to take place after his descent on earth. All sensible people should ponder as to how

far it contains things against the laws of nature, how it is a bundle of contradictions and full of flaws, and how it is derogatory to the dignity of prophethood. However, all this spurious material is not to be found in the two most authentic books of Hadith. Imam Muhammad Ismail Bukhari, may Allah's mercy be on him, gives no indication whatsoever that the coming Messiah will be actually and really that same Jesus himself. In fact, he has narrated two Hadith reports from the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him, which establish conclusively that the first Messiah and the second Messiah are two different persons. For, the subject matter of one of the Hadith reports is that the son of Mary shall descend among you, and it is explained that he will be your Imam and shall be one of you. These words should be pondered upon seriously, in which the Holy Prophet Muhammad explains the term 'son of Mary' by saying that he will be an imam of yours who will be from yourselves, and will be born among you. In other words, the Holy Prophet, in order to remove the misconception that could arise in the minds from the words 'son of Mary', added these explanatory words so that people would not take him to be the actual son of Mary: "*Nay, he is your imam from among yourselves*".

The second Hadith report which settles this point is that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him, has described the physical appearance of the first Messiah as different from that of the second Messiah, and the latter description fits my humble self perfectly. Just think: does not the clear variance between these two appearances provide solid proof of the fact that the first Messiah and the second Messiah are two different individuals?

Another point deserving attention is that while our *ulama* stubbornly insist that the Hadith report about the descent of the son of Mary is to be taken literally, yet when some of the wiser ones among them are asked about the meaning of the report that the son of Mary will descend, and he will break the cross and kill the swine, although they still take the term 'son of Mary' literally but as regards the cross and the swine they quietly give it a metaphorical and figurative meaning, as we do. Thus they are convicted by this admission of their own, for it can be argued to them that as regards the three factors, namely, the descent of the son of Mary, the breaking of the cross and the killing of the swine, they admit that two of these should be taken metaphorically to mean something else, so why cannot the third one, the descent of the

son of Mary, also be taken metaphorically to signify someone else? Now I ask: is it the way of sense and wisdom to continue adhering to such a bundle of contradictory ideas, when the explanation revealed to me is more in accordance with reason and logic?

Besides this, these old ideas are also subject to the most serious and strongest objections on the basis of reason in many other ways as well, from which there appears to be no way of escape.

One of these objections is that it is not proved from anywhere in the Holy Quran that Jesus was taken up to heaven in his physical body. On the contrary, the death of Jesus is clearly mentioned on several occasions in the Holy Quran. In one place the admission is made by Jesus himself that he died:

“And I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst cause me to die Thou wast the Watcher over them. And Thou art Witness of all things.” [5:117]

So when death has been proven, it is obvious that his body will have been buried in the earth like all others who die. For, the Holy Quran proves clearly that only his soul was raised to heaven, and not his body. That is why in the above mentioned verse Jesus clearly speaks of his own death. If he had risen to heaven as a living person, in his physical body, then he would never have mentioned his death and would never have said that he had died and left the world. Now it is clear that, as it was only his soul that rose to heaven, how can his body come along with it at the time of descent?

#### **Impractical to believe in bodily ascension**

Another objection is that all science, old and new, agrees that it is impossible for a human being to reach even the intensely-cold upper atmosphere in this earthly body of his. In fact, recent researches in natural sciences have shown that when the tops of some high mountains are reached, the air in that region is found to be so unsuitable for health that it is not possible to survive there. So it is quite absurd to think of this human body reaching the moon or the sun.<sup>1</sup>

Another objection is that those people who believe in the existence of skies also believe that they are in motion, and that this motion is twofold. Now if it is supposed that Jesus bodily rose to the skies, it is obvious that he shall not remain in the upper direction all the time, but he will sometimes be above and at

other times he will be below. Under these circumstances, it cannot be said confidently that he must descend from above. Would it not be possible that he rises up from below? For, his abode would not in fact be a fixed place; if in the morning he was above the earth, he would be below it in the evening! To accept that he should be in such a traumatic condition amounts to the worst kind of disrespect.

Yet another objection arises that, assuming for the sake of argument that Jesus bodily rose to heaven, we cannot deny that even there all animal and human bodies must undergo changes with time, and must inevitably and necessarily face death one day due to the passage of time. Thus, given this circumstance, firstly it must be accepted that Jesus, having completed his span of life, has died while still in heaven. And he must be buried in a graveyard belonging to beings who live somewhere else in space, as nowadays it is accepted that such beings do exist. If, however, we assume that Jesus is alive till now, then no doubt he would be an old and aged man after the passage of so many years, and he would by no means be fit to perform any service to religion. So, being in such a frail condition, his return to the world will not serve any purpose apart from causing him unnecessary distress.

#### **Footnote 1 (referred to in left column)**

At this point the objection could be raised that, if it is impossible to ascend bodily to heaven, then how could the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of Allah be on him, have gone to the *Mi'raj* in his body? The answer is that the journey of the *Mi'raj* was not with this physical body; on the contrary, it was a vision of the highest order, which takes place in a state of wakefulness. In such a vision a person may visit the heavens with a spiritual body, in accordance with the capability of his soul. Since the capability of the soul of the Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of Allah be on him, was of the highest degree and had reached the uppermost point of development, so in his journey of *Mi'raj* he reached the furthest point of the universe, known as the *'Arsh Azim* (the great Throne). Although this journey was in fact a vision which resembles a state of wakefulness to the utmost degree, I most certainly do not call it a dream nor consider it as an ordinary vision. On the contrary, it was a vision of the highest possible order which is really wakefulness; in fact this state is clearer and more vivid than physical wakefulness. I myself have had experience of this kind of vision. There is not scope here to write further. Allah willing, I will write in more detail elsewhere. ■

<sup>1</sup> For the footnote at this point, see the right-hand column.

## Fasting — Its impact on the social behaviour of a Muslim

by Mr. Nasir Ahmad, Lahore  
Former Editor, *The Light*

“The month of Ramadan is that in which the Quran was revealed, a guidance to men and clear proofs of the guidance and the Criterion.” (2:185)

“And when My servants ask you concerning Me, surely I am nigh. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me, so they should hear My call and believe in Me that they may walk in the right way.” (2:186)

“And swallow not up your property among yourselves by false means, nor seek to gain access thereby to the judges, so that you may swallow up a part of the property of men wrongfully while you know.” (2:188)

Islam has appointed two festivals for Muslims, i.e., *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha*. As with other festivals, these are occasions for expressing joy, merriment and celebrations, but the purpose of these festivals for Muslims is not merely to indulge in joyous and merry-making activities, rather, it is primarily to give thanks to Allah for the successful completion of a programme of spiritual training in obedience to the commandment of Allah. This month-long spiritual training is to inculcate in the character of a Muslim social nobility, concern for others' problems and willingness to sacrifice for their amelioration. This is the standard of nobility which Islam wishes its adherents to maintain in their thoughts and actions. Allah refers to it in the Holy Quran in the following words:

“Certainly We created man in the best make.” (95:4)

Dr. Basharat Ahmad, a well-known commentator of the Holy Quran, describes beautifully the lowliness and height in the character of a man, in his beautiful commentary, *Anwar-ul-Quran*, in the following words:

“Good and evil are intertwined in the activities of human beings. On the one hand we see persons with fine sentiments of

nobility and gentleness, while on the other hand we find persons who are selfish and ferocious like animals. If we see angelic persons observing benevolence and love, then we also see persons who are greedy and selfish like wolves and bloodthirsty and ruthless like scorpions. ... It is the man who guards outside the houses so that the inmates may enjoy peace and security, and it is again the man who stealthily enters a house from the back and takes away valuables and causes insecurity and misery to the inmates.”

If we require years of education and hard work to reach a high position in worldly life, so, too, do we require much more education and hard work to discipline our inner self which is the centre of our thoughts and which ultimately motivates our actions. The Holy Quran refers to this as follows:

“O men, there has come to you indeed an admonition from your Lord and a healing for what is in the hearts, and a guidance and a mercy for the believers.” (10:57)

Prayer, *Zakat*, Fasting and Pilgrimage to Makkah are various stages in the spiritual training programme of Islam. When a person passes through these stages, a particular attitude and behaviour evolve in his character as envisaged by the teachings of Islam and it brings him nearer to his Creator and consequently his inner qualities shine out for the benefit of his fellow human beings. For instance, during the blessed month of Ramadan a Muslim makes special effort to obey the commandments of Allah by reciting the Holy Quran, observing prayers with concentration and devotion, shuns evil thoughts and actions and tries to entertain noble ideals and resolutions. He also shows greater concern for the amelioration of the sufferings of other human beings and offers them help and sympathy by means of *fitrana*, charity and other modes of ease and comfort which he can afford. This is how a man's heart is cleansed of the dross of greed, selfishness, hate, jealousy and feelings of class distinction and instead love and compassion are generated in his relationship towards his fellow beings. For instance, it has been made obligatory for a person who is incapable of keeping fast to feed a needy person. The obligation of feeding a needy person can be discharged by providing what the person needs and it does not necessarily mean giving of food only. Now if a person is incapable of keeping the fast and for this reason Allah has exempted him, why it is that Allah still wants him to feed a needy person? It teaches that the showing of sympathy towards one's fellow beings

is one of the primary objects of fasting and even if one is incapable of fasting, he is required to demonstrate sympathy and concern for his fellow human being. Innumerable references can be quoted from the Holy Quran and examples shown from the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad which bear witness to the fact that human sympathy and well-being are the essence of the teachings of Islam. The following verse of the Holy Quran shows how liberal and broad-based should be the attitude and treatment of a believer in showing sympathy and kindness to others:

“And serve Allah and associate naught with Him, and be good to the parents and to the near of kin and the orphan and the needy and the neighbour of (your) kin and the alien neighbour, and the companion in a journey and the wayfarer and those whom your right hands possess. Surely Allah loves not such as are proud and boastful.” (4:36)

In the very next verse a stern warning has also been given to those who are negligent in being kind and sympathetic towards others. The verse says:

“Who are niggardly and bid people to be niggardly and hide that which Allah has given them out of His grace. And We have prepared for the disbelievers an abiding chastisement.” (4:37)

So, fasting is a training programme for promoting a spirit of restraint, selflessness and human sympathy — a programme during which a man not only experiences hunger and thirst but he also exercises control over his emotions and passions. It is written in Hadith that if someone talks to you harshly or quarrels with you during fasting, tell him politely that you are keeping fast. In other words, one is enjoined to keep one's passions and emotions in restraint and to show forbearance and humility on occasions when one is likely to lose one's temper. Time does not permit me to explain what sort of self-control, patience and kind treatment one is required to show as a result of fasting.

I would now like to read to you a short part of a long narration from a Hadith report of the Holy Prophet Muhammad which highlights the objectives and blessings of the month of Ramadan:

“O people, a month of grandeur and blessings is about to spread its wings over you. In this month there is a night which is better than a thousand months. It is a month of patience, and the reward of patience is Paradise. It is a month of sympathy and sharing of sorrows.

The first ten days of this month bring blessings, the second ten days bring Allah's forgiveness and the last ten days grant deliverance from the fire of Hell. Anyone who lightens the workload of his slave or servant in this month, Allah shall forgive his sins and shall save him from the fire of hell.”

The Founder of Islam (SAL), who has been called “A mercy unto the nations”, has implicitly enjoined us in this way to be kind during the month of fasting even when we are taking work from our servants by lessening their workload. In other words, by doing so one will be showing concern and sympathy for the hardship of others. Exploitation in any form for one's own benefit is against the spirit of Islam. The Holy Prophet's particular concern for servants, and for that matter, for subordinates, during the month of fasting, shows how important it is for a Muslim to practise social welfare and kindness towards the weaker sections of the society.

Now I would like to quote a well-known British writer, Thomas Carlyle, who, in his beautiful book, *Heroes and Hero-worship*, pays tribute to the teachings of Islam and in particular to the social edicts of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAL). While appreciating the spirit of compassion for one another which the Holy Prophet preached and practised, Thomas Carlyle, in his second lecture entitled “The Hero as Prophet”, quotes the following words of the Holy Prophet of Islam:

“ ‘Ye have compassion on one another’. This struck me much; Allah might have made you having no compassion on one another — how had it been then!”

At another place in the same lecture, the Christian author, while analysing the teachings of Islam, regards doing of noble and virtuous deeds as earning God's heaven, and in this connection he especially refers to the five daily prayers and abstinence from wine:

“His religion (i.e. the religion revealed to the Holy Prophet) is not an easy one: with rigorous fasts, lavations, strict complex formulas, prayers five times a day, and abstinence from wine, it did not ‘succeed by being an easy religion’. As if indeed any religion, or cause holding of religion, could succeed by that! It is a calumny on men to say that they are roused to heroic action by ease, hope of pleasure, recompense — sugarplums of any kind, in this world or the next! In the meanest mortal there lies something nobler. The poor

swearing soldier, hired to be shot, has his honour of a soldier, different from drill-regulations and the shilling a day. It is not to taste sweet things, but to do noble and true things, and vindicate himself under God's heaven as a God-made man, that the poorest son of Adam dimly longs. Show him the way of doing that, the dullest day-drudge kindles into a hero. They wrong man greatly who say he is seduced by ease. Difficulty, abnegation, martyrdom and death are the allurements that act on the heart of man." (pp. 236, 237)

The Christian scholar has regarded "doing of noble and true things as earning God's heaven", and undoubtedly the very object of enjoining fast is to provide training and discipline for leading such a pure and purposeful life to which the Christian author has referred. During this blessed month a believer is eager to comply with the commandments of Allah and to impress upon his mind Allah's sovereignty and grandeur so that his whole being is immersed in submission and subservience to his Creator. Let us examine the wording of the *niyyah* of keeping fast and see how the concept of the All-pervading Allah is being impregnated into the mind and soul of a Muslim:

"O Allah, I keep fast to seek Your pleasure, and I profess belief in You, and I trust in You and I break the fast with what You have provided."

How beautiful is the way in which a servant expresses his gratitude to his Master and how submissive is the style in which he shows his obedience to his Creator and how elegant is the manner in which close relationship between the servant and Master has been depicted! And see how Allah conveys acceptance of His servant's expression of thankfulness and obedience to his Lord through the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAL) which is mentioned in the Hadith in these words:

"Fasting is for Me and only I shall recompense it."

And in the Holy Quran we find that Allah acknowledges a servant's supplications and submissions and graciously accepts them in these majestic words:

"And when My servants ask you concerning Me, surely I am nigh. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me; so they

should hear My call and believe in Me, that they may walk in the right way." (2:186)

Here Allah has laid down a condition for accepting the prayers of His servant and granting him His audience and that is, that he should have complete faith in Him and should obey all His commandments with complete sincerity and submission.

While giving details of the injunction of fasting, Allah especially mentions two other things: firstly, regard and respect to be shown to women and secondly, not to devour the wealth of others unlawfully. In my humble opinion, these are the two areas of the social fabric of a society where self restraint plays an important role in maintaining social justice and that is why Allah, while enumerating the objectives of keeping the fast, has enjoined a believer to avoid indulging in these social evils.

Brothers and sisters, you will bear me out that these two social evils are eating away at the social fabric of every society, particularly the Muslim countries and the third world. It will be worthwhile to listen to the Divine admonition given in the Holy Quran in this regard:

"And swallow not up your property among yourselves by false means, nor seek access thereby to the judges, so that you may swallow up a part of the property of men wrongfully while you know." (2:188)

The Holy Quran has given detailed instructions to inculcate and promote civilised social attitude and behaviour such as good manners, sympathy and good wishes for each other and the society at large and also shows concern for the weaker sections of the society, with special emphasis on restraint of sex relations and the guaranteeing of honour and respect for women. And that is why while dealing with the details of how to observe the fast, special attention has been drawn towards the building up of a congenial and pleasant atmosphere at home. This is what the Holy Quran says in this regard:

"They (women) are an apparel for you and you are an apparel for them." (2:187)

Brothers and sisters! together the husband and the wife constitute an important unit of a society, and who, through their mutual love and affection and spirit of sacrifice, usher in a pleasant and congenial domestic life, where children find a haven of care and compassion. This in reality is the crux of the well-known saying of the Holy Prophet, "Paradise lies under the feet of the mother". By regarding woman as



apparel for man, Allah has driven home the importance of woman for man in a beautiful manner. Just as dress not only covers defects and the nakedness of the body but it also enhances its outward beauty and elegance, so does a woman provide physical and mental peace and comfort to the family. This is what the Holy Quran says in the following words:

“And of His signs is this, that He created mates for you from yourselves that you might find quiet of mind in them, and He put between you love and compassion.” (30:21)

The word “apparel” in this verse also alludes to the patient and selfless service a woman renders not only in embellishing and decorating the home, but also in bringing up and educating the children. If I were to describe it in modern terms, she is the “interior decorator *par excellence*”.

And now I conclude this sermon with a prayer that may Allah grant us wisdom and courage to fulfil the religious and social obligations envisaged in the institution of fasting so that we are able to inculcate in our attitude and behaviour sympathy, kindness, patience, sincerity and forbearance. ■

## Are Muslims supposed to be miserable during Ramadan?

*Reflections on the coincidence of Ramadan and the Christmas season, December 2000 C.E.*

by Selim Ahmed, England

I do not think that non-Muslims really do expect Muslims to be miserable during Ramadan, but it is true that one can see some examples of misery and bad temper among Muslims at this time, and some non-Muslims do tend to think that Muslims should be very solemn and serious during this month.

To what extent, then, is the expectation justified that Muslims should be miserable during Ramadan? I think, first of all, that what Christians, at least, expect of Muslims are coloured by their own beliefs about Christianity. There may be a feeling that fasting is a kind of self-punishment, and it is indeed a matter of fact that there is a long tradition of self-punishment in

Christianity and that this tradition has been taken to extremes by some people. For hundreds of years, some monks and priests of the Roman Catholic Church have been in the habit of torturing themselves with hard, sharp and heavy objects, or with whips and uncomfortable clothing, in the name of religion. There is evidence that the practice is not dead, even now. Protestant and Orthodox Christians have generally avoided these particular extremes, and most Christians of all denominations would emphatically reject them if you asked them about it. Yet this kind of self-punishment is one of the outcomes of a certain way of thinking that is still very much with us — the idea that we are all very guilty and unworthy to the point of being hopeless cases, and therefore deserving of punishment. This may be accompanied by a belief in a capricious god or gods, or, in Western Christianity, by a belief in the doctrine of Original Sin. The result of these notions is that Europe and the New World have inherited a tendency to feel that punishing yourself is somehow ‘holy’ and is intended to ‘buy off’ the Almighty so that the Divine Being will not then inflict a more decisive punishment in this life or the next.

This attitude is, of course, much older than Christianity, going back untold thousands of years, and in addition to the notion of averting punishment, we can note that people in ancient societies also resorted to making themselves suffer in various ways — including the use of fasting to that end — in the hope that their god would see their suffering and take pity on them!

It is not surprising, then, given this historical background, that some Shi‘ite Muslims, when remembering the martyrdoms of Hazrat Hassan and Hazrat Hussain, resort to beating and cutting themselves in a way that goes beyond legitimate mourning and is not at all in accordance with the Holy Quran and Sunnah. It is probably no coincidence, either, that the Shi‘ah mostly live in a part of the world where such practices were particularly noticeable long before Christianity and Islam, and were associated with the worship of gods of vegetation, fertility and rain, or with the anniversaries of the death of such gods.

As I have said, such harsh practices are rejected by most Christians, but they are the extreme form of a certain attitude that tends towards misery and self-punishment.

Now, the word for fasting in Islam is *sawm*, which simply means ‘refraining from something’. There is no question of actively punishing yourself, then, but does it imply refraining from being cheerful or

sociable, or from legitimate forms of entertainment? And if so, is this for the purpose of inflicting suffering on yourself?

The very first thing that the Holy Quran says about fasting is that it is for the purpose of 'guarding against evil' (*la- 'allakum tattaqūn*, 2:183). The Quran then goes on to say in 2:184 that if a person is sick or on a journey, the fast may be optionally broken and any missing day of fasting may be made up later. If this is extremely difficult, feeding the hungry is undertaken as a substitute. We immediately see from this second verse that there is another objective of fasting, and that it has something to do with positive good deeds, as well as guarding against evil. The verse clarifies this point by saying next:

*Fa-man tatawwa'a khayran*  
*Fa-huwa khayrul-la-hū*  
*Wa-an taṣīmū khayrul-lakum*  
*In kuntum ta'lamūn* (2:184)

This may be paraphrased in English as follows:

*Now, whoever does good spontaneously*  
*It is better for that person;*  
*But it is also better for you to keep the fast*  
*If you understand the matter.*

This means that doing good anyway, whether it is to make up for a missed fast or not, is proper and beneficial (*khayrun*) and, similarly, fasting is in itself beneficial if we undertake it, as there are reasons behind it (*in kuntum ta'lamūn*). We can conclude that fasting is something that falls into the same category as good deeds, and that good deeds and fasting are both parts of a single programme of human betterment.

So, should fasting be a hardship? It depends on what we mean by a hardship. The Arabic word *tatawwa'a* in the phrase *Fa-man tatawwa'a khayran*, "Whoever does good spontaneously", basically means 'to make an effort to do something', 'to take it upon oneself to do something'. Maulana Muhammad Ali comments as follows:

"Fasting is here called *tatawwu'*, or the *spontaneous doing of good*, but it also means the *doing of an act with effort*, and fasting requires great effort on the part of man. The concluding words of this verse again point out the object of fasting. It no doubt entails hardship but it serves a very good purpose and brings about great good in the end."

The Holy Quran itself states further on, in connection with fasting, "Allah desires ease for you, and He desires not hardship for you":

*Yurīd-Ullāhu bi-kum ul-yusr*  
*Wa-lā yurīdu bi-kum ul-'usr* (2:185)

The contrast between ease and hardship is emphasized by the rhyme between the Arabic words *yusr* and *'usr*.

From these verses we can see that any hardship that is entailed by fasting is not for the sake of self-punishment, and that such hardship should not be taken to extremes.

In amongst these verses on fasting, there is a short verse which states:

"And when My servants ask you about Me, (the answer is that) I am certainly close at hand. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he or she calls upon Me, so that My servants should hear My appeal to them, and so that they may conduct themselves in the right way." (2:186)

The positioning of this verse makes a connection between fasting and the relationship between Man and God. Allah is not absent and uninterested, which is what the philosophy known as deism teaches, but present, involved and committed, and is all the time teaching us the best way to live. This, then, is what we need to bear in mind when fasting and at all other times.

A God Who is committed in this way cannot be asking us to punish ourselves or to be particularly harsh with ourselves. But should we at least be miserable, even if we are not exactly punishing ourselves? Well, both the Holy Quran and the example of the Holy Prophet are against this. To take just a few examples:

1. Surah 10:58 says: "Proclaim that the grace of Allah and His mercy is what they should rejoice in." Rejoicing in this way does not go together with misery.
2. Surah 27:73 reads: "Surely your Lord is full of goodness towards human beings, but most of them are not grateful." Now, a grateful person will not be miserable about the thing for which he or she feels gratitude.
3. The very first verse of Surah Fatihah says: *Al-ḥamdu li-llāhi Rabb-il- 'ālamīn*, "All praise is due to Allah, the Nourisher of the worlds to perfection." The word *ḥamd* covers *gratitude* and *delighting in something* as well as *praise*, and so distinctly rules out misery.
4. A number of Hadith place on record the Holy Prophet's sense of humour, and it was also

said of the Holy Prophet: “I have never known anyone who had such a smiling expression as the Messenger of Allah.”

To these examples we can also add that of the Prophet Jesus, who is recorded as having said:

“So, too, when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites: they make their faces unsightly so that other people may see that they are fasting.” (Matthew, 6:16, New English Bible translation)

I believe we have said enough to rule out misery during Ramadan, but let us also remember that many Muslims, who do not regard fasting during Ramadan as a form of self-punishment, do still become irritable and do go around looking miserable. They are actually setting a bad example, and it would seem that they become like this because they have failed to understand the purposes of fasting properly, or to understand the principles that apply to it, and as a result tend to treat it as if it were an arbitrary imposition which entitles them to be bad-tempered.

It also follows that solemnity or seriousness during Ramadan (as opposed to outright misery or bad temper) is a matter of kind and degree. There is a voluntary practice known as *i'tikāf*, which is covered in Book 33 of Bukhari. The words “and touch them not while you keep to the mosques” in the Holy Quran, 2:187 are an allusion to *i'tikāf*, although it is not referred to by name or described in any greater detail in the Holy Quran. *I'tikāf* involves isolating yourself in a mosque during the last ten days or so of Ramadan and requires an additional self-restraint or self-discipline both during the hours of fasting and during the hours in between, but it is entirely optional and the object is clearly not to cause unnecessary hardship or to be over-serious, much less to be miserable, but only to devote more time to clearing one's mind of routine matters and becoming more aware of living in the presence of Allah.

I would conclude, then, that unless we happen to be practicing *i'tikāf* towards the end of Ramadan, and most people do not or cannot, we should be available for other people, non-Muslims included, during this month, and that we may, as long as we are not compromising our fasting, take part in social activities and forms of entertainment. This would certainly include sharing, within reason, in the festivity of the Christmas season, to the extent compatible with the teachings of Islam. ■

## The finality of prophethood – 2

*Speech at the annual meeting (Jalsa) of  
the Lahore Ahmadiyya Anjuman in  
December 1917*

by Maulana Muhammad Ali

Translated by the Editor

### Prophethood unchanged while world has changed

I now move on to the question: is there any practical evidence of the finality of prophethood or not? Before the Holy Prophet Muhammad, prophets were appearing one after another, in one country or another, among the Israelites and other nations. So why has no prophet appeared in any nation for thirteen centuries, if it is not due to the ending of prophethood? Is this not practical proof and the evidence of Allah by His action of the fact that the institution of prophethood has terminated? The world has undergone such tremendous and complete changes that if a person belonging to the time of the Holy Prophet were to see the world today, he would not recognize it. Yet despite these transformations, we find no change in prophethood as it was in his time, and no prophet having arisen in any nation of the world after Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him. So in practice too Islam has been proved to be the Last Religion of the world. Before Islam, prophet upon prophet came, but after Islam not even one prophet has come.

### New religions after Holy Prophet's time

It is true that there are religions which were established after Islam. For example, there is the Sikh religion, a new religion. Another is the Babi and Bahai religion. Thirdly, in our own time, a claim to prophethood is attributed to our Imam, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

#### 1. The Sikh religion

The founder of the Sikh religion was Hazrat Baba Guru Nanak, may the mercy of Allah be upon him. A prophet must come with some new guidance, but the scripture of the Sikh religion contains nothing new. It contains praise of Islam and the Holy Quran and the same teachings. Consider just the *chola sahib* (sacred cloak) of Guru Nanak, which is kept as a sacred relic at Dera Baba Nanak. It is claimed that it has words

written upon it in seven languages. But all those words are in Arabic only, and there is no word in any other language. And in Arabic too all that is written are the teachings of Islam and verses from the Quran. This is a permanent memorial testifying that Baba Nanak did not bring any new teaching, nor establish any religion separate from Islam, nor teach any principles other than those of Islam. Consider the whole of his life: he goes to Makka and performs the *Hajj*. After his return he joins some Sufi saint or sits at some Muslim shrine and undertakes spiritual devotions. His teachings mention prayers and fasting. All this shows clearly that the Sikh religion, as far as its founder is concerned, is no new religion in conflict with the finality of prophethood.

## 2. Babi and Bahai religion

Long after Nanak, in the early nineteenth century, a man was born in Iran called Mirza Ali Muhammad, belonging to a Shia sect called the Shaikhi. They believe that, between the disappeared Imam and the Imam Mahdi, a mediator is born in every age. As Mirza Ali Muhammad belonged to this sect he made the claim of being the *bab* (gateway), which can only be the same status as the head of the Shaikhi sect, meaning that he is the path of knowledge. Gradually he started using the word *nuqta* (point) for himself, claiming that all prophecies were fulfilled in him. This is his only claim, and besides this he created no new principle or teaching.

After him a man called Mirza Yahya succeeded him, who had a brother by the name of Husain Ali. The latter in fact started to carry out the work of leadership, while Mirza Yahya remained in seclusion. Hence Mirza Husain Ali became influential among the followers. The Bab had predicted the appearance of a man who would be a manifestation of God. Mirza Husain Ali made the claim to be that manifestation of God and named himself Baha-ullah. But none of them was a claimant to prophethood. Baha-ullah did not call himself a prophet but declared himself to be God. He started a new religion with a new religious law. But his book, the *Aqdas*, does not contain any mention of the attributes of God or the oneness of God. There is some moral teaching and some religious rules. He has decreed three prayers, with nine *rakas* in each prayer. He has instituted a month consisting of nineteen days, and he has ordered nineteen fasts to be kept. He has created a fund and placed his sons in charge of it. It is notable that our Hazrat Mirza sahib also created a fund but did not make either himself or his sons in charge of it.

He made no change in *Hajj* to the House of God. He has allowed a man to have two wives. Therefore it is wrong to say that he disallowed polygamy. Regarding moral teaching, he has taught forgiveness and forbearance. But for those who are persecuted all the time it is meaningless to claim that they teach forgiveness and forbearance because they are not able to retaliate. That is not the real teaching of forgiveness. Real forgiveness and restraint is what was taught by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, that is that he had overcome his opponents, he possessed full power over them, and he was in the position to exact vengeance for the persecution to which they had subjected him and his followers, so it was meaningful for him to teach forgiveness and he could justifiably claim that he exercised forgiveness.

## Bahauallah's teachings did not come into force

After Bahauallah his book remains closed, although it can still be obtained. His son Abbas, known by the title '*Asan-i Azam*, is their leader now. But these people, instead of following their scripture the *Kitab Aqdas*, teach the Holy Quran. They say the same prayers and perform the same fasts as are enjoined by Islam. Whatever they act upon are all Islamic teachings. This is practical evidence that their new teachings have not even prospered to the extent that they themselves act upon them. This Mirza Abbas who is their leader has prayed at the Woking Mosque, England, behind Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din. As to their beliefs, they do not present them openly. When sitting with Muslims they generally express agreement of beliefs with them, and only now and then they may hint at their own beliefs in a subdued way.

This is the state of a religion which arises after the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, that in a practical sense it could not gain currency among its own followers nor establish any new prophethood or religious law.

## 3. The Mahmudiyya sect (followers of Mirza Mahmud Ahmad)

Now a third such group has come into existence which claims a prophethood, or one could say that they wish to establish a prophethood. However, the one to whom they attribute the claim of being a prophet, he is absolved by at least the fact that one group from among his followers declares it to be a false accusation. In practice, they too have not been able to establish a new prophethood.

### Discussion on *Khatam an-nabiyyin*

#### Meaning of the verse

This verse that I read out:

“Muhammad is not the father of any man from among you, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the *Khatam an-nabiyyin*.” (33:40)

was revealed when Zaid divorces his wife and the Holy Prophet Muhammad marries Zainab. At this juncture the above words are revealed. Someone can ask as to what is the connection between these two apparently unrelated statements:

1. that he is not the father of any man,
2. that he is the Messenger of Allah and the *Khatam an-nabiyyin*.

If we look carefully, the first statement negatives his fatherhood of any man, and this could create the misconception that it is not only denied that he is a physical father of any man but that it is also denied that he is a spiritual father. To remove this misconception the words are added: “but he is the Messenger of Allah”. The word *lakin* (‘but’) is used to remove wrong ideas.

So it is intended to convey that while in the physical sense he is not the father of any man, but as he is the Messenger of Allah and every messenger or prophet is the father of the righteous among his followers, so he too is the spiritual father of people. However, it is not sufficient to say “Messenger of Allah”, because, while he would be the spiritual father, the doubt could arise that since the fatherhood of previous prophets always terminated after some time, his period of being the spiritual father might come to an end as well after some time. The question arises: Is his spiritual fatherhood also of a temporary kind, so that his period of prophethood would only last for some time and then come to an end? It is to answer this question that it is added: “and the *Khatam an-nabiyyin*”, meaning that his period of prophethood would never come to an end because he is the *Khatam* (‘Seal’ or ‘Last’) of the prophets and no prophet would come after him.

#### Clear, decisive statements versus allegorical

A belief has been based upon this verse. The basis of a belief must only be laid upon clear, decisive statements, and not upon allegorical words whose meaning is indefinite. Some people base a belief upon words that are not clear-cut and decisive, but the Holy Quran has taught against this practice. It says:

“He it is Who has revealed the Book to thee; some of its verses are decisive — they are the basis of the Book — and others are allegorical. Then those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part of it which is allegorical, seeking to mislead” (3:7).

It is warned here that the consequences of following allegorical words so as to base basic beliefs upon them are that people are misled. Those who have done this have stumbled greatly and introduced grave errors in their beliefs.

#### Wrong beliefs based upon ambiguous words

Take Christians for example. What was it that made them stumble them? They have certain prophecies, such as that of the coming of God, the Alpha and the Omega. On the basis of such prophecies they declared Jesus to be the son of God and created the doctrine of the trinity. In fact, prophecies are always couched in allegorical language and their meaning only becomes clear when they are fulfilled. Therefore it is not right to base a religious doctrine on the words of a prophecy.

The Hindu belief that soul and matter are pre-existing from eternity is also based on ambiguous words. In last year’s annual gathering here, our Maulvi Abdul Haq demanded from the Aryas that they show the text of the Vedas which teaches this doctrine. They could not produce any such text. The basis of this doctrine turned out to be a story of two animals sitting on a tree, one of them eating and the other observing him. This is not something so clear that a fundamental belief can be founded upon it.

As compared to this, the Holy Quran does not teach the basis of any doctrine in allegorical language. Whatever belief it requires us to hold, it casts such full and brilliant light upon it as to leave no room for doubt. What we have to see is whether the belief in the finality of prophethood is based upon clear and conclusive words of the Holy Quran or upon words that do not clearly yield this meaning. Has the Quran itself put beyond all doubt the meaning of *Khatam an-nabiyyin*?

#### Meaning of *Khatam an-nabiyyin* in the Quran

As far as the Holy Quran is concerned, there is no room for the coming of a prophet after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. For example, it says:

“Blessed is He Who sent down the Discrimination [Quran] upon His servant that he might be a warner to the nations.” (25:1)

Here the Holy Prophet is clearly called the warner to all nations. Then he is declared to be “a mercy to the nations” (21:107), and again it is said:

“And We have not sent you but *kaffat-un lin-nas* (sufficient for all mankind) as a bearer of good news and as a warner” (34:28).

If the prophethood of the Holy Prophet Muhammad were not enough then certainly one would look for another prophet. However, as he is the one who is the warner and the mercy for all nations, the institution of prophethood cannot continue after him. He was not only *kaffat-un lin-nas* (sufficient for all mankind) for a limited period of time, but also *kaffat-un lin-nas* in the sense that there is no prophet after him.

### Difference between prophet and *mujaddid*

Why did the Holy Prophet Muhammad give the news of the coming of *mujaddids* after him and not give the news of the coming of prophets? The reason is that religion was made perfect and complete in Islam, and a completed religion does not require prophets. It requires *mujaddids*. When a religion has some deficiency, it is there that prophets arise. If prophets were to have come after the Holy Prophet, why did he mention at all the arising of *mujaddids*? How could he omit announcing the news of the greater blessing and mention the good news only of the lesser blessing?

### Meaning of *Khatam an-nabiyyin* in Hadith

Let us now turn to Hadith and see whether the Holy Prophet ever explained the meaning of *Khatam an-nabiyyin*. What we find is a great mass of reports where he has explained this meaning, and in the light of his explanation we need not look elsewhere.

#### 1. The Holy Prophet said to Hazrat Ali:

“You stand in the same relation to me as Aaron did to Moses except that there is no prophet after me.”

This report is contained in Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, the two topmost books of Hadith among the six authentic collections.

2. In another report, claimants to prophethood are called false:

“There will be among my followers thirty liars each one of them claiming that he is a prophet of Allah, but I am the *Khatam an-nabiyyin*, there is no prophet after me.”

In the first report he told Hazrat Ali that despite standing in such a close spiritual relationship to him he still would not become a prophet because no

prophet can come. Here it is explained in a second way, namely, that those who would claim to be prophets after him would be liars because no prophet can come after him.

3. In another report it is explained in yet another way:

“My example and the example of the prophets before me is like a man who built a house, and made it fine and beautiful, except that he left a place for a stone in the corner. People used to go around it and wonder at it and say: why has a stone not been placed here? I am that stone and I am the *Khatam an-nabiyyin*.”

These are the words of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Show respect for his words. If there had been only one Hadith report, it could have been rejected. That cannot be done with these reports. After the placing of this last stone, there is no way in which another prophet can come. No new stone can now be added unless you remove this corner stone first!

4. In another unanimously agreed report he said:

“I have been given five names: I am Muhammad, I am Ahmad, I am *al-Mahi* through whom Allah will eradicate unbelief, I am *al-Hashir* at whose feet mankind will be gathered together, and I am *al-'Aqib* and *al-'Aqib* is he after whom there is no prophet.”

The title *al-'Aqib* even by itself would have indicated that he came *after* all the prophets, but he makes the meaning absolutely plain by adding that *al-'Aqib* is he after whom there is no prophet.

5. Another Hadith report which, though it is not in Bukhari or Muslim, is still in the six authentic collections of Hadith, is as follows:

“If there had been a prophet after me, it would have been Umar.”

While the qualities found in prophets were found in Hazrat Umar, but despite this he was not a prophet. Mirza Mahmud Ahmad now considers that just the possession of these qualities actually makes a man into a prophet.

6. He also said: “I have been granted superiority over other prophets in six respects: ... and [the sixth is that] prophets have come to an end with me.”

By using the form “have come to an end” (*khutima*) he has made clear the meaning of *Khatam an-nabiyyin*. ■

*To be continued in next issue.*

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